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“US Defense Contractors : Are they a potential target ?”

By Jesse Robert CAS, CPO, ATO II

Homeland Security Reports

IACSP Membership Perspective

**U.S. Defense Contractors:
Are They A Potential Target?**

Impact of Terrorism

Authored by: Jesse Robert, CPO

September 11th was indeed a strategically planned attack on the United States. The intelligence gathering, planning, training, and financial support and logistics of this attack were highly coordinated. As a result of these attacks, the world has changed its posture against terrorism. We are now targeting sleeper cells, cutting off financial support to these groups, and rounding up key supporters and leaders of their networks.

All of this will surely make it harder for groups such as Al-Qa'ida to communicate because of the angular targeting of their infrastructure. In my opinion and the opinion of many others this is good progress in the struggle against terrorism. But one must consider the interim results.

Knowing that we have temporarily disabled Al-Qa'ida's ability to conduct long term planning of strategic attacks, the question naturally arises: How will this effect their current operations? In my opinion this will not stop attacks that were planned long before 9/11. Those operatives and cells are always one step ahead of us. It is a proven fact that in most cases Al-Qa'ida plans their attacks well in advance, sometimes 2-3 years in advance. A terrorist, whether domestically or internationally based, will always strike where we least expect them.

A Chronology of Recent Terrorist Attacks against the United States

April 19, 1995: The Alfred P. Murray federal building was hit with a truck bomb. This bombing opened our eyes to the threat

of domestic terrorism, and as a result Federal building security was improved and certain types of fertilizer containing ammonium Nitrate were banned. So far this has been the most significant, or should I say horrific, domestic attack.

June 26, 1996: The Khobar towers were hit with a truck bomb which consisted of explosives attached to a fuel truck. Subsequent analysis resulted in restructuring of Force Protection measures and training throughout the Department of Defense.

August 7, 1998: The U.S. embassies were bombed in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Once again this resulted in threat awareness and improved security being implemented for U.S. interests overseas.

October 12, 2000: The USS Cole was attacked in the Port of Aden. This clearly demonstrated the need to improve Force Protection. As a result, Port security was improved both home and abroad.

You can see a pattern developing. Each time a terrorist attack occurs, we harden the target type by using lessons learned. It is obvious we need to take a more proactive, universal approach to security...

September 11, 2001: The Pentagon and World Trade Center were struck from the air with hijacked commercial jetliners being used as missiles. The government temporarily grounded all aircraft and stationed the National Guard in the airports with empty weapons. Tarmac security is now being improved through a number of measures, including the terminating of contracts with untrained, underpaid private security guards. Those guards are being replaced with federal airport screeners.

You can see a pattern developing. Each time a terrorist attack occurs, we harden the target type by using lessons learned. It

is obvious we need to take a more proactive, universal approach to security, but budgetary constraints seem to hinder this approach on all fronts. No one seems to value security until it is too late.

The Potential Threat

Defense contractors provide an integral element to our economy and National Security Infrastructure. Fear of terrorism has stricken different portions of the country: nuclear power plants, transportation systems, financial institutions, computer networks, and water supplies to name a few. Other than shopping malls and large public gatherings, what targets are left? Domestically speaking Military Installations, the White House, Federal buildings and events such as the Olympics have so far been adequately protected, and will likely continue to be so.

In theory, an attack on a defense contractor could prove to be very detrimental. Moreover, methodically planned concurrent attacks on multiple contractor facilities, could prove disastrous. The 1995 embassy bombings and the 2001 Pentagon and WTC attacks have demonstrated that terrorists have the funding and coordination to carry out such concurrent attacks.

Loss of human life would be only one aspect of a successful attack; Scientists, engineers and production crews would be in complete fear, crippling their ability to work. These individuals provide all aspects of material to the government. They provide support of innovative technologies, software, fighter jets, ships, tanks, radar equipment and especially precision guided missiles. To put it bluntly, the United States and its allies are totally dependent upon contractors to fulfill their operational needs.

Production could be impaired or even halted depending on the nature or scope of the attack. A halt on production would cause great damage to the U.S. especially

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with the current demand for military hardware and technology in anticipation of conflicts overseas. Terrorist attacks could literally delay a buildup of weapons, and impair our ability to fight wars on multiple fronts.

To put it mildly, our armed forces are low on manpower due to military cutbacks by previous presidential administrations. Furthermore, our ability to supply weapons and ammunition to our deployed soldiers has been weakened. This weakens our ability to defend ourselves or to take preemptive action against countries harboring terrorists, rogue nations or those identified as the axis of evil.

Most defense contractors have a higher level of threat awareness and security in comparison to the average private sector company. To my knowledge most DOD contractors have things such as access control systems, alarm systems, patrol officers, perimeter fencing, CCTV and local agreements with law enforcement. But are the defense contractors really safe?

Don't get me wrong, I do believe defense contractors are prepared. Unfortunately in my opinion, defense contractors are not prepared for the right threats.

Defense contractors are prepared for spies, industrial espionage, theft of trade secrets, proprietary processes and technology, and perhaps even public demonstrations. Even in this post cold war era, the threat of espionage is still present. However the threats facing defense contractors are not limited to espionage alone. Terrorism remains a very real threat to defense contractors.

Defense contractors must find a balance between the two threats, spies and terrorists. Ironically in some ways the characteristics of a spy and terrorist are the same.

The terrorist, much like the spy must conduct surveillance and collect intelligence before striking. Both the terrorist and spy are our adversaries, but one is more of an imminent threat than the other. A spy wants to know what your secret is, what you are making, how they can steal it without being detected and utilize it to benefit themselves.

A terrorist only needs to know that you are a U.S. company that provides integral products to the Government. For them to collect such information, all one must do is go to a web site and find who makes what critical products. From there the planning begins. Successful implementation of the plan may be as simple as a few truck bombs in the parking lots at multiple facilities nationwide.

To sum this up, from my perspective as a security practitioner, the threat is clearly here. Defense contractors need to have the same protection as Military Bases and Federal Buildings. The most important components are threat awareness and operational security training.

They need to have anti-terrorism training similar to what is provided to DOD personnel. They should have contingencies in place and in some cases may need to have armed personnel the same as Federal installations.

Finally they should receive funding from the Government to incorporate these simple measures; after all it's literally in everyone's best interest to protect DOD contractors from the threat of terrorism.

Authored by: Jesse Robert, CPO
Webmaster: J.R.'s Global Security Resource
<http://www.securityresource.spyw.com>
Member: IFPO, IACSP

The Difficulty in Tracking Names and Suspects

(Editor's Note. A full length article on this subject will be published in the next issue of the Journal of Counterterrorism & Homeland Security Int'l.)

On December 29, 2002, the FBI issued an alert that five men, who entered the United States on or about December 24, 2002, were wanted for questioning. The FBI alert stated that the names of these fugitives were:

Abid Noraiz Ali, 25
Iftikhar Khozmai Ali, 21
Mustafa Khan Owasi, 33
Adil Pervez, 19
Akbar Jamal, 28.

News reports have stated that these men may be traveling under British passports and that law enforcement considered the matter "very serious". Although this alert was later determined to be bogus, it did point out the difficulty in finding and tracking potential terrorists entering the U.S. and other western countries.

For the past twenty years, Language Analysis Systems (LAS) has specialized in name recognition software and provides systems to improve name searching to US intelligence agencies, border agencies, law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, and many others.

Presently LAS is making available to the public, for the purpose of increasing education and understanding, the most common spelling variations associated with these men's names, ordered by frequency of occurrence, as derived from the LAS Name Data Archive (NDA), a database comprising approximately one billion names from all countries of the world. While nu-